

Newsletter editor's 2018–19 report For UMRA Board of Directors and Archives

Submitted by Kristine Mortensen

Preface. The 2018–19 UMRA program year was another year of transition for the UMRA news team. The production of the monthly UMRA Newsletter during the preceding program year had been performed by a four-member volunteer News Editing Team, led by Ginny Hanson as coordinating editor, and a paid production editor, Sadie Brendalen. In addition to eight issues of the newsletter, published monthly September–November and January–May, the team was responsible for producing a monthly eNews, introduced in September 2017, plus news copy and photos for posting on the newly redesigned UMRA website, umra.umn.edu, launched October 18, 2018.

For the May 2018 Newsletter, I, Kristine Mortensen, a member of the four-member volunteer News Editing Team, volunteered to lead the team as coordinating editor and prepare the copy for the print/PDF newsletter, eNews, and website, and work with the production editor to complete all three. After experiencing the full range of that work, I agreed to assume the responsibilities of the coordinating news editor for the 2018–19 program year as a freelance editor, receiving compensation (below market rate, as had been the case for Ginny Hanson from 2004 to 2017)..

UMRA Newsletter, eNews and website. With the launch of the UMRA eNews in September 2017 and the redesigned UMRA website in autumn 2018, and the consolidating of the news gathering and editing responsibilities from a team of four volunteers to one freelance editor, the coordinating editor was now responsible for the gathering and editing of all content (text and photos) for all three platforms—print, eNews, and website—beginning with the September 2018 issue of the newsletter.

As coordinating editor (now newsletter editor), I was supported in this work by a team of three volunteer contributing editors: Ginny Hanson (photography), Julie Medbery (proofreader), and Becky Anderson (Book Notes and Book Club events).

After consulting with the UMRA president to discuss editorial priorities for each issue of the newsletter, I communicate with various members of UMRA to solicit ideas, articles, photos and other images for the newsletter; receive and edit copy for clarity, accuracy, and length; write headlines and decks (short introductions or teases, referred to in UMRA website taxonomy as “ledes”); and work with Production Editor Sadie Brendalen to produce the final print/PDF newsletter and eNews, and post news content on the UMRA website. [Note: Beginning with the September 2019 Newsletter, I also assumed responsibility for posting news content on the UMRA website.]

The 20th of the month continues to be the deadline for general articles to be submitted to the newsletter editor; more time-sensitive articles and photos related to the month's board and program meetings are generally submitted 1-3 days after the month's meeting.

Because a key role of the newsletter is to promote the next month's meeting and encourage members to attend, the newsletter is produced under deadline. My goal is for the PDF version of the each month's newsletter to be posted on the UMRA website and the eNews to be sent one week (7-8 days) after the prior month's meeting, and for the print newsletter to be printed, mailed, and received by subscribers 7-10 days later (i.e. two weeks after the meeting).

The print newsletter continues to be the "parent" of the UMRA eNews and news-related content posted on the UMRA website. Articles typically include:

- Upcoming speaker intro and photo
- Upcoming workshop description, including presenter(s) intro and photo(s)
- Letter from the president
- Summary and photo of previous month's program
- Summary and photo of previous month's workshop
- HELLO, my name is (feature article plus photo introducing an UMRA member)
- Firsthand—experiences with aging (personal essay by UMRA member)
- Welcome new members to UMRA
- In remembrance (brief obits)
- University Retirees Volunteer Center (URVC) volunteer opportunities
- Meeting notices
 - Armchair Traveler
 - Book Club
 - Financial & Legal Issues Group
 - Photo Club
 - Social Activities
 - Travel Committee
- Food for Thought
- Occasionally
 - Annual financial report
 - Annual slate of candidates for UMRA officers and boards
 - UMRA service awards
 - Promotion of 1666 Coffman units for sale

Newsletter sponsorship. Sponsor messages first appeared in the UMRA Newsletter in October 2012. Long-time UMRA member Earl Nolting recruited sponsors, who were charged \$250 for a ¼ page message in the print newsletter. In summer 2018, UMRA Treasurer Carl Adams assumed

this responsibility, contacting all prior sponsors and the Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing to solicit their participation for the coming program year.

In spring 2019 and at the request of President Jerry Rinehart, I created a sponsor rate sheet offering sponsors a variety of opportunities for supporting UMRA:

Sponsorship rates (per month)

	Newsletter	Newsletter + Forum
¼ page	\$250	\$500
½ page	\$500	\$750
1 page	\$750	\$1,000

In May 2019, the Pillars of Prospect Park became the first to sponsor the UMRA forum. Forum sponsorship offers sponsors an opportunity to create a message on a slide to be displayed on the two large screens in the Campus Club West Wing Dining Room prior to UMRA’s monthly luncheon and until the start of the speaker presentation or longer (if the speaker has no slides of their own to show). The University of Minnesota Foundation sponsored our September 2019 forum.

Messages from UMRA thanking the month’s sponsors are published in both the print/PDF newsletter and eNews.

In summer 2019, UMRA President-elect Bill Donohue recruited UMRA member Bev Moe to assume responsibility for soliciting sponsors (and discount providers), and as a result of Bev’s outreach and enthusiasm, and the expanded sponsorship opportunities, sponsor support for UMRA’s 2018–19 program year showed a nearly two-fold increase over the previous year.

Additional responsibilities. In November and February, I was asked by President-elect Bill Donohue to assist an effort by UMRA leadership to submit two opinion pieces to the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. Specifically, I was asked to copy edit the essays, and to help “pitch” both to Doug Tice, the paper’s commentary editor. Both were published, the first on November 18, 2018, under the headline “Keep politics, division out of choice of U president” and with the names Frank Cerra and Bill Donohue appearing in the byline; the second was published on February 18, 2019, under the headline “Next up at University of Minnesota: Selection of four regents. Value merit, resist politics.” The byline was noted as “Multiple Authors.”

I was also tasked during the year by the board to create some additional marketing materials for UMRA, including business cards, an UMRA Fact Sheet, and a tabletop pull-up banner to promote UMRA during various events, such as the periodic Benefit Fairs hosted by the University’s Office of Human Resources. These marketing materials were produced in time for UMRA to participate, for the first time, in a resource fair hosted at the Continuing Education and

Conference Center on the St. Paul campus as part of the College of Continuing and Professional Studies “Encore Transitions” program in May 2019. UMRA Secretary Lynn C. Anderson and I represented UMRA at the resource fair, which provided a good opportunity for us to speak with dozens of individuals, both University people and others, approaching retirement or newly retired. One result of this experience was a suggestion brought to the UMRA board by Lynn to expand eligibility for UMRA membership to include individuals who worked for the University at some time but retired from employment elsewhere. This idea was approved by the board, as a policy to clarify Bylaws Article III, at its meeting in October 2019.

In summer 2019, President Bill Donohue asked me to join the UMRA Executive Committee as a regular guest, and in August 2019 the president and I (attending on behalf of President-elect Frank Cerra) represented UMRA at the 2019 Annual Conference of the Big Ten Retirees Association, held at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. This well-produced and well-attended conference was a great opportunity to learn about the other associations, and to share ideas about issues and opportunities affecting our relevance to the memberships we serve.

I am also a member of UMRA’s Communications and Outreach Committee, created in 2017.

Looking ahead. Beginning with the September 2019 UMRA Newsletter, the I assumed responsibility (from the production editor) for posting news content on the UMRA website, primarily to increase efficiency during our monthly news production cycle. Rather than spending time writing and sending editorial instructions to the production editor, I now post this content myself. Posting sometimes requires assistance from the UMRA webmaster, because I have limited editor access to the website.

Having learned how to post content on the website, this means I can also make news-related updates between newsletters without having to burden UMRA’s webmaster to make them.

In lieu of her posting content on the website, I asked the production editor to explore the possibility of using Mailchimp to distribute the UMRA eNews instead of the UMRA List-Serve. Why? To achieve greater efficiency in the distribution of the eNews, and to take advantage of the user analytics that should be available to us via Mailchimp—the email marketing platform UMRA uses to produce its eNews. User analytics are not available with the List-Serve. This remains a work in progress.